

EUGENE H. PETERSON

THE MESSAGE[®] OF HOPE

Encouragement from the Bible in Contemporary Language



That God was pleased to offer us incarnated hope through his own Word—well, it is truly a grace. This newly reimagined version of *The Message of Hope*, organized around various angles and topics of hope, makes the perfect devotional companion for yourself or gift for a hurting friend. It is refreshing water, soothing the parched soul. Written like a poem directly to our hearts, Eugene Peterson's translation continually points us to the greatest object and subject of our hope—Jesus.

AUBREY SAMPSON, coplanter of Renewal Church;
author of *Overcomer* and *The Louder Song*

I read *The Message of Hope* on the train with commuters, in quiet morning hours, and in the evening on the couch as my son jumped on me to wrestle. Each time I was taken deeper into questions, sadness, faith, doubts, joy, and thoughts of others

suffering hard times, from sickness to poverty to war. No matter the moment, through these words, I was led toward hope. You will be too. Real hope. Poetic, gritty hope. The kind in the trenches. Why? Because God's "love never quits" (Psalm 136).

KENT ANNAN, director of humanitarian and disaster leadership at Wheaton College; author of *You Welcomed Me*

*The Message is a contemporary rendering
of the Bible from the original languages,
crafted to present its tone, rhythm, events,
and ideas in everyday language.*



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NavPress 

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with Tyndale House Publishers*



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*“Hope holds to Christ the mind’s own mirror out
To take His lovely likeness more and more.
It will not well, so she would bring about
An ever brighter burnish than before.”*

GERARD MANLEY HOPKINS, “Hope Holds to Christ”

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Introduction

Hope. We hear it and we so often dismiss it. *Hope* is the long shot, the moving target, the impossible dream. It's wishing on a star.

But even though hope can seem hopelessly idealistic, we find ourselves returning to it, hoping for it, grieving its absence. In such a brutally realistic world as ours, what draws us back again and again to hope?

Maybe, just maybe, hope is more real and reachable than we think.

Maybe we've simply misplaced our hope. We hope for things like a house, a job, a family, or other trappings of success—good

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things, all of them—not realizing that none of them can burrow all the way down to where we need hope the most. They're too finite, too fixed, too fleeting. Even after we've achieved or acquired them we feel a vague sense of emptiness and disappointment. Is there more to life? Is there more to hope?

The Bible is—among other things, but there at the heart of it—a message of hope. We read in the Bible that God offers us *eternal* hope—hope that reaches well beyond our circumstances, even well beyond our imagination. The same God who made the universe made *you*. The same God who causes the sun to rise and set is keeping track of you and wants to care for you.

In the pages that follow, you'll find a journey through the message of hope found in the Bible—beginning with clear-eyed realism and culminating in and growing out of the life of Jesus Christ. *The Message of Hope*

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is excerpted from *The Message*, a Bible rendered in contemporary language by scholar, pastor, author, and poet Eugene H. Peterson. It might not sound like Bible readings you've encountered before, but it is a carefully constructed translation that gets at the heart of the Bible, which gets at the heart of God.

As you read, you may discover that some verses linger with you longer than others. This is a good thing. The nature of the Bible is to do just that:

God means what he says. What he says goes. His powerful Word is sharp as a surgeon's scalpel, cutting through everything, whether doubt or defense, laying us open to listen and obey. Nothing and no one can resist God's Word. We can't get away from it—no matter what.

HEBREWS 4:12-13

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God's Word is relentless because God is relentless. So as passages stick with you, consider sticking with them. Commit them to memory so you can return to them when you need them. You may find that they return to you without prompting. Eugene once reflected on the impact of memorizing Scripture:

It gets it into your subconscious. You're making friends with the language. . . . I'm not a *good* memorizer, but I'm a pretty *constant* memorizer. I memorize a psalm, and two weeks later, I can't remember one of the sentences and I have to go look it up and practice it again. But there's a good feeling about memorizing. It's like you're friends with the text.*

* Eugene H. Peterson, "On Bible Memory." messagebible.com/about

INTRODUCTION

Each section of *The Message of Hope* concludes with a suggested passage for memorization. But by all means, don't limit yourself to the suggested passage. Memorize those passages that are most memorable. You may discover on future readings of this book that what lingers in your mind is an entirely different passage. Consider memorizing that passage as well. You're making friends with the language, making friends with the text. Keep in mind that the Author of the text is God himself. And Jesus Christ, the Son of God, assures his followers, "You're my dearest friends! The Father wants to give you the very kingdom itself" (Luke 12:29-32).

Read on, then, and discover the hope that God, your friend, has for you.

LAMENT

*“Her glass is blest but she as good as blind
Holds till hand aches and wonders what is there.”*

GERARD MANLEY HOPKINS, “Hope Holds to Christ”

Lament is where the people God calls his are invited to turn when they find themselves separated from hope. Therefore, lament is, paradoxically, where the message of hope begins.



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Their cries for relief from their hard labor
ascended to God:

God listened to their groanings.

God remembered his covenant with
Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob.

God saw what was going on. . . .

God understood.

EXODUS 2:23-25

Master, GOD!

Oh, please, look on me again,

Oh, please, give strength yet once more.

JUDGES 16:28

You are the one and only God,
sovereign over all kingdoms on earth,
Maker of heaven,
maker of earth.

Open your ears, GOD, and listen,
open your eyes and look. . . .

LAMENT

Make all the kingdoms on earth know
that you are GOD, the one and
only God.

2 KINGS 19:15-16, 19

Long enough, GOD—
you've ignored me long enough.
I've looked at the back of your head
long enough. Long enough
I've carried this ton of trouble,
lived with a stomach full of pain. . . .

Take a good look at me, GOD, my God;
I want to look life in the eye.

PSALM 13:1-3

Now GOD, don't hold out on me,
don't hold back your passion.
Your love and truth
are all that keeps me together. . . .

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Soften up, GOD, and intervene;
hurry and get me some help,
So those who are trying to kidnap my soul
will be embarrassed and lose face,
So anyone who gets a kick out of making
me miserable
will be heckled and disgraced.

PSALM 40:11, 13-14

God, God, save me!
I'm in over my head,

Quicksand under me, swamp water
over me;
I'm going down for the third time.

I'm hoarse from calling for help,
Bleary-eyed from searching the sky
for God. . . .

GOD, it's time for a break!

LAMENT

God, answer in love!
Answer with your sure salvation!

Rescue me from the swamp,
Don't let me go under for good,

Pull me out of the clutch of the enemy;
This whirlpool is sucking me down.

Don't let the swamp be my grave,
the Black Hole
Swallow me, its jaws clenched around me.

Now answer me, GOD, because you love me;
Let me see your great mercy full-face.

Don't look the other way; your servant
can't take it.

I'm in trouble. Answer right now!

Come close, God; get me out of here.
Rescue me from this deathtrap.

PSALM 69:1-3, 13-18

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GOD, listen! Listen to my prayer,
listen to the pain in my cries.
Don't turn your back on me
just when I need you so desperately.
Pay attention! This is a cry for *help*!
And hurry—this can't wait!

PSALM 102:1-2

GOD, pick up the pieces.
Put me back together again. . . .
Don't add to my troubles.
Give me some relief!

JEREMIAH 17:14, 17

I'm the man who has seen trouble,
trouble coming from the lash
of GOD's anger.
He took me by the hand and
walked me
into pitch-black darkness.

LAMENT

Yes, he's given me the back of his hand
over and over and over again.

He turned me into a skeleton
of skin and bones, then broke the bones.
He hemmed me in, ganged up on me,
poured on the trouble and hard times.
He locked me up in deep darkness,
like a corpse nailed inside a coffin. . . .

I gave up on life altogether.
I've forgotten what the good life is like.
I said to myself, "This is it. I'm finished.
GOD is a lost cause."

I'll never forget the trouble, the utter
lostness,
the taste of ashes, the poison I've
swallowed.

I remember it all—oh, how well I
remember—
the feeling of hitting the bottom.

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But there's one other thing I remember,
and remembering, I keep a grip
on hope:

GOD's loyal love couldn't have run out,
his merciful love couldn't have dried up.

They're created new every morning.

How great your faithfulness!

I'm sticking with GOD (I say it over
and over).

He's all I've got left.

GOD proves to be good to the man who
passionately waits,

to the woman who diligently seeks.

It's a good thing to quietly hope,

quietly hope for help from GOD.

It's a good thing when you're young

to stick it out through the hard times.

When life is heavy and hard to take,

go off by yourself. Enter the silence.

LAMENT

Bow in prayer. Don't ask questions:

Wait for hope to appear.

Don't run from trouble. Take it full-face.

The "worst" is never the worst.

Why? Because the Master won't ever
walk out and fail to return.

If he works severely, he also works tenderly.

His stockpiles of loyal love are immense.

LAMENTATIONS 3:1-6, 17-32

"Bring us back to you, GOD—we're ready
to come back.

Give us a fresh start."

LAMENTATIONS 5:21

"In trouble, deep trouble, I prayed to GOD.

He answered me.

From the belly of the grave I cried, 'Help!'

You heard my cry.

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You threw me into ocean's depths,
 into a watery grave,
With ocean waves, ocean breakers
 crashing over me.
I said, 'I've been thrown away,
 thrown out, out of your sight.
I'll never again lay eyes
 on your Holy Temple.'
Ocean gripped me by the throat.
 The ancient Abyss grabbed me and
 held tight.
My head was all tangled in seaweed
 at the bottom of the sea where the
 mountains take root.
I was as far down as a body can go,
 and the gates were slamming shut
 behind me forever—
Yet you pulled me up from that
 grave alive,
 O GOD, my God!
When my life was slipping away,

LAMENT

I remembered GOD,
And my prayer got through to you,
made it all the way to your Holy Temple.”

JONAH 2:2-7

A Memory Verse for Lament

“Bring us back to you, GOD—we’re ready
to come back.

Give us a fresh start.”

LAMENTATIONS 5:21
